Rocky Mountain Review

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(Write Director for Summer Session Catalogue.)

Comment

The University of Nebraska announces a forthcoming anthology "Mid Country" which will include the following stories from RMR: "In God's Image" by L. G. Doran, "The Nice Guy" by Morton Fineman (also to be reprinted in Nicholas Moore's English Anthology), "The Buck in the Hills" by Walter Van Tilburg Clark and "A Partnership with Death" by Vardis Fisher. William March's story in this issue will also be included in his new collection to be published by Harcourt, Brace.

Robert Lowry writes from Italy, "I want to get a book of war stories out soon. Maybe illustrated. Something terrific in the way of format. Could handle all of that, even from over here. Is there anything you could tell me as to who would print it, anybody who might be interested?" If there are any takers, the editors will be glad to forward their names to Cpl. Lowry.

Frank Brookhouser, in France, lets us know that Whit Burnett is reprinting one of his stories in the forthcoming "Great Stories of Childhood" and that he will also have one in "Mid Country."

RMR receives many exchanges, and we wish to note especially the recent interesting issues of Meanjin Papers (Brisbane, Aust.), Circle, Experiment, Interim, Workshop (Jalisco, Mex.) in addition to the standard little magazines like Accent, Kenyon Review, Partisan Review, etc. Circle has made the greatest strides, appearing first in a mimeographed format and now in a very handsome and in some respects spectacular printed format. The View influence is apparent and not disavowed.

The Fall issue of RMR will mark our tenth anniversary, and we expect to commemorate the occasion with a special edition. New writing will be included by every important Rocky Mountain writer, and so far we are able to announce contributions by Vardis Fisher, Bernard DeVoto, Wallace Stegner, from the region, and from elsewhere, Paul Engle, Robert Penn Warren, Delmore Schwartz and

(Continued on Page 160)

The Kingdom of Katz

By WILLIAM FIFIELD

To review quickly the familiar biographical facts that have been told and retold in a dozen books and a hundred articles since his death: Arthur M. Katz deserted his invalid wife in Atlanta, Georgia, in August, 1934. seven months after *The Other Side of Mrs. Smith*, his first painting to be exhibited, had created a sensation in New York. In 1936 he turned up in Arizona. The winter of '36-'37 was spent in a cave in the Grand Canyon. On September 14, 1937, he was found dead in a hotel room in Butte, Montana.

Those are the bare facts of his life, included in all accounts. The facts of his posthumous fame are almost equally well known. While never neglected after *The Other Side of Mrs. Smith*, it was not until *Agnostic Siamese* was hung the spring following his death that the tide of acclaim really began to rise. Others in the *Aspects of a Siamese Kitten* series followed, and by the time of the first anniversary of his death in 1938 it was clear to everyone that the American art world had had and lost a genius. In October, 1939, *Revision of Self-Portrait* was found in a hayloft of a barn outside Tucson, Arizona. It was immediately hailed as the picture of the decade.

Those are the substantiated facts. It is on this slim framework that the legend of Arthur Katz has been reared: the fantastic account that has him sharing his Grand Canyon cave with a whelping mountain lion to obtain the studies of mother and cubs that form the basis of his series of *Other Savages;* the many versions, ranging from the ironical to the macabre, grown up about the few known facts of his death in Butte; and so on. But perhaps it was inevitable that this should have happened, since Katz himself, while by no means the grand figure of the present-day legend, was certainly an all but inexplicable mystery.

I bumped into him for the first time on the balcony of the Bronson Galleries on East 58th Street one afternoon in January, 1934; but didn't know until several weeks afterwards that the man I'd encountered was Katz. When I say bumped into him, I mean it literally. I went up to the balcony to get some more chairs for the festivities that were going on below and, coming through the door, nearly ran over a small figure

standing back in the shadows. My first thought was that the fellow was one of the hundreds of artists who were living from hand to mouth in New York at that time. I supposed he'd sneaked into the building somehow in hopes of catching the arm of a dealer or critic as he came out from the tea——(which was being given in honor of none other than Katz, on the occasion of the sale of *The Other Side of Mrs. Smith* to the Peabody Museum).

But on second glance I decided he probably was not an artist after all. It was true that he was a little seedy, but his nails were neatly, even fastidiously trimmed, and his hair, what there was of it, was combed with the greatest care and brushed down the sides of his head. This order and cleanliness, in fact, was overemphasized, as though he spent the greater part of his time brushing and scrubbing himself. The flesh of the hands was of a faint pinkish tinge that actually suggested too long an immersion in hot water. There was reddish hair along the backs of the hands and fingers, and a rim of reddish, really almost carrotty hair around the bald crown. The eyes were small and blue——curiously translucent, like eyes of blue glass.

The jar when I came through the door and bumped into him seemed hardly to disturb him at all. He looked around, but without surprise, then slowly retracted his hands (I use the only word that describes the peculiar motion) and clasped them behind him. I mumbled an apology; I remember that I was more confused than the situation warranted. He did not answer. So I busied myself with gathering up the chairs, and, tucking three or four under each arm, turned and went below. All the while the small individual——he wasn't over five feet three or four—stood and watched me, offering no help and making no comment.

Katz did not put in an official appearance at the tea, and in the resultant furor I forgot about the man I'd bumped into on the balcony. But ten or eleven weeks later, when the now-famous self portrait arrived in New York, I remembered. The face in the portrait was strangely exaggerated and altered into the mask of an at once noble and mild-mannered man, an especially blunt and forthright individual; but behind the mask I recognized my man of the balcony.

Self-Portrait was shown in late March, if I remember correctly. The first of the cat paintings arrived for exhibit in April or May. And in August Katz deserted his invalid wife, left Atlanta, and disappeared from the face of the earth.

The following summer, in July, I happened to be passing through Atlanta and decided to look up the wife, thinking she might be able to shed some light on the mystery of her vanished husband. I was surprised to find the name listed in the Atlanta telephone directory. After the cat paintings had begun to arrive, and remembering the feline quality of the woman in *The Other Side of Mrs. Smith*, everyone had naturally supposed that the name "Katz" was a pseudonym, adopted as a sort of joke. But no. there was the listing in the book: *Arthur M. Katz.*

I went to the address given and rang. Mrs. Katz herself met me at the door, and I saw that the story of her invalidism had been somewhat exaggerated—though she did tell me in the course of our conversation that she had been bedridden when Katz left her the previous August.

Seeing her in the doorway, and then as she walked ahead of me into the sitting room, it was evident enough that she had been the model for *The Other Side of Mrs. Smith.* I saw that the picture which had been universally accepted as a psychological *tour de force* was really only simple reporting. In the painting one sees the woman's back facing outward as she stands at her bureau mirror. This position is, of course, the ostensible inspiration of the title. But then one sees the face reflected back by the mirror—the eyes narrowed almost to slits, the lips seeming about to draw back from the teeth, the one hand, ostensibly lifted to adjust a loose hairpin, resembling a paw with outthrust claws. And it was this woman of the picture, latently at least, who sat across from me in the Katz sitting room in Atlanta. The opalescent sea-green eyes, with flecks of yellow. The thin, narrow hands, that moved with stealth.

She could not account for her husband's disappearance. She hadn't heard a word from him since the day he'd walked out of the house ten months earlier. "I'm leaving," he'd said, coming into the room where she lay bedridden. "Don't bother looking for me." And that was the last she saw of him.

"So you see I don't know if he's alive or dead," she told me. "Maybe he killed himself." And a note of hopefulness came into her voice.

"Oh, I'm sure not," I answered. "I'm sure your husband's alive somewhere. Perhaps some of us who are interested in him can get together and put up the money to have him looked for and brought back."

The woman said nothing. She looked away. But she blanched, and one hand, as she lifted it reflexively, quite suddenly began to tremble.

But she need not have been afraid. Some small search was made, but it turned up nothing. From the day in August, 1934, when he left Atlanta, until well into 1936 is a complete blank. What Katz did during that time, how he lived, if he painted, is not yet known, and perhaps never will be. There have been many guesses, of course, but all that is known for certain is that he walked into a restaurant in Phoenix, Arizona, one day in the spring of 1936 and was recognized by a man from Bisbee. Then ensued the famous dialogue, since so often repeated.

"Pardon me," the man from Bisbee said, "but aren't you Arthur Katz?"

"Yes," said Katz, hardly bothering to raise his eyes.

"But—but, good heavens, you've been practically given up for dead," the man from Bisbee sputtered. "Don't you realize that?"

"Yes. Yes, I do," said Katz, and, turning, walked out of the restaurant.

After that, he disappeared again for more than a month—long enough for the Phoenix story to be generally discredited. But then, during the months of June, July and August, 1936, he was seen by several people. In November it was definitely ascertained that he was living in a cave in

the Grand Canyon. He identified himself in Winslow one day when he brought in a painting for shipment east.

The painting was *Spawn*, a study of a mountain lion cub. It sold for an exceptional price. And I took a cue from this. Remembering that Katz's pictures usually come in series, as soon as I could get away from New York I set out for the Grand Canyon, hoping to obtain the next mountain lion painting for myself.

I had the name of the Indian guide who took supplies in to Katz at two-week intervals. After a four-day search I located him, and he agreed to take me along on his next supply trip.

As it turned out, the place was not far, once the bottom of the canyon had been reached; but it was around an outjutting sandstone buttress and beyond a narrow gorge, so it was necessary to go the last mile of the way by boat. The Indian had a rough canoe dug out of half a tree trunk, and in it, surrounded by heaped-up supplies, we were catapaulted through the gorge.

A minute or two after we had cleared the gorge, the Indian tapped my shoulder with his paddle, and when I looked around, pointed. Up the cliff face a little ways, set back over a fifteen or eighteen-foot shelf, I saw the entrance to the cave. The Indian dipped in his paddle and back-watered, and our bow swung in toward the shore.

"I'll go first . . . alone," I suggested, handing the Indian a five-dollar bill.

He took it, gave a short nod, otherwise did not answer.

As I reached the shelf in front of the cave, I started in fright. I had seen some sort of creature crouched on a rock. But it turned out to be only a cat And yet a queer little thing. An ordinary Siamese kitten, but self-contained and baleful instead of frolicsome. It lifted its yellow eyes to mine and gave me an enigmatical look. Then it rose, stretched, and walked softly and silently away.

I called Katz's name. There was no answer. I called again. After calling a third time, I went forward and looked into the cave.

The recess, scooped out of the sandstone, unexpectedly had walls of chalk white. The floor was laid with clean gravel. At first I thought this was a natural phenomenon, then realized the stones must have been picked out of the river bed pebble by pebble and carried up to the cave. There was an easel to the right with some canvases beside it. Firewood was stacked neatly on the left near the cave mouth. Everything was scrupulously in order and spotlessly clean.

I was just starting toward the canvases to see if the artist had put paint on them when I became aware that I was not alone in the cave. I don't think I actually saw Katz that first moment; more I should say I sensed him. I knew he was there, but my eyes had to become accustomed to the dark before I really saw him. He was sitting at the back of the cave with his legs crossed under him and his pink hands on his knees. He was leaning slightly forward. The blue, translucent eyes, looking out

from the pallor of his face, regarded me fixedly. For a moment neither of us spoke. Then I recovered enough to stammer:

"I called but——"

He nodded. While never moving from where he sat, he managed to convey the impression of gliding toward me. Then I realized he actually was moving.

"Sit down," he said. "Better near the mouth where there's more light"

We sat near the cave entrance and talked of his painting for ten or fifteen minutes. He seemed only half interested, but still willing to talk. He smiled but made no comment when I reminded him of our earlier meeting in New York.

"I visited your wife in Atlanta the summer before last," I told him.

He looked up, but made only a conventional remark.

"I think she's afraid of you," I ventured.

He pursed his lips and sat reflecting for a moment. Then just as I was about to add something, he asked, "Did she tell you why?"

I shook my head.

"I think she knew," he said thoughtfully, "that I tried to kill her."

He paused, and I watched his face and waited. His features were nearly blank.

"There were some accidents," he continued after a minute or two, "but she was lucky. Or I guess maybe she caught on and was on her guard all the time."

We sat for another few moments, and somehow, in spite of what he'd just said, it was as though we had come to a natural lull in a commonplace conversation. Suddenly I found myself feeling at ease with the man beside me. I even, to my astonishment when I thought about it afterwards, felt a certain sympathy with his attempts to murder his wife.

"So when you couldn't kill her you exorcised her soul by painting 'Mrs. Smith'," I said.

He looked around with lifted eyebrows. "Eh, what's that?"

"You wanted to cleanse her . . . cleanse her of the evil spirit."

"Oh." He nodded. "Yes, I guess you could put it like that. Never really thought of it just that way."

His way of speaking was homespun. He seemed a mild, meek little man; the kind you might expect to run up against on the whittling bench out in front of the country store. If you really got to know him, I found myself thinking, this queer genius would turn out to be just an ordinary man.

Bt then the Indian came in view, approaching us in a stealthy, furtive, apologetic, sidewise manner. And at the sight of him, Katz's pinkish hands seemed to slide forward out of his sleeves and remain poised in the air. I can't put it any other way than this: he seemed about to pounce. His eyes glittered malignantly.

I helped the Indian bring the things up from the canoe. Katz stood

by, doing and saying nothing—as he had that day in New York when I was gathering the armload of chairs. He had promised me his next painting when it was finished. Now he reaffirmed the promise in the briefest terms possible. It was obvious he was waiting for us to go. He did not wave when, a few minutes later, we went down to the canoe.

The following September, the morning of the fifteenth, the newspapers carried the story of his death. His body had been found the evening of the day before in a hotel room in Butte, Montana. But the newspaper accounts were sketchy, contradictory, and in some cases cheaply sensational—so I wrote a letter of inquiry to the manager of the hotel where he had died. The manager, a man named Bailey, and evidently an individual more sensitive than the average, replied a few days later at some length.

According to Bailey's letter, what had happened was this: Katz's Siamese kitten (the model for the *Aspects of a Siamese* series, two paintings of which are now in the Metropolitan Museum) had contracted hydrophobia. Several people had known that the kitten was sick, but had not known what was wrong with it. Bailey had suggested that Katz take it to a veterinary, but he'd refused and taken it to his room to care for it himself. He came out only once, the second day, when he bought food, milk and the daily paper. He then locked himself into the room with the kitten, refusing to open the door even to the maid when she came to clean up. He was never again seen alive. The next day strange poundings and knockings were heard by those in adjoining rooms, but after a while they quieted. Then there was a long silence—too long a silence. When Bailey broke in the door on the last day of the week, Katz and the Siamese kitten were dead on the floor. Details about the room indicated how horrible had been the deaths they'd died. But when Bailey turned Katz's body over, the look on the face was one of beatific joy. The eyes were open, and seemed to be shining; the lips were parted in an ecstatic smile.

So vividly did Bailey describe this smile in his letter to me I felt I could actually see it. It made a deep impression on me, as it clearly had on Bailey. And I've often thought and wondered about it since. Why did Katz smile? As Bailey described it, it was a smile of triumph. But what triumph could one find in dying alone in a bare hotel room from the scratch or bite of a rabid kitten?

When *Revision of Self-Portrait* was found in a Tucson, Arizona, hayloft in 1939, I thought perhaps I'd come upon a hint to the answer. In this final painting, the nobility, the mild-manneredness of the earlier self portrait are gone. Instead, in a shell of gloom and darkness, sits a man, legs crossed under him, pink hands on knees. The glass-blue, glinting eyes stare out and, reminiscent of *The Other Side of Mrs. Smith*, the lips seem about to draw back and disclose the teeth. So did Katz, seeing in the last vision of his life that evil could not be crushed since it was in one as well as around one, embraced the ultimate exorcism eagerly?

Or did he die in an ecstasy of hate? Did he, with hate perverted almost into love, triumph in the final victory of his enemy?

I don't know. It may be that the smile was not a smile at all; it may have been nothing more than the constrictive effect of the hydrophobia on the muscles of the jaw and face.

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Essays

By BERNARD DE VOTO, AUSTIN WARREN, RENE WELLEK.

Poetry

By ROBERT PENN WARREN and JOHN PEALE BISHOP, and others.

Book Reviews

THE MAGIC YEAR, STEPHEN HERO, SAMUEL JOHNSON, THE MASQUE OF REASON, THE GOLDEN ROOMS, NEW DIRECTIONS, THE NEW ROAD, and other late poetry, fiction, biography and criticism.

Lan Min

By MARY I. BECK

The bright beam from a sentry's torch caused the two to spring suddenly into form out of the dark. Stooped and wet and ragged, they faced the light with unflinching eyes. The beam searched out a once-white bandage over one side of The Man's close-shaved head, above the gauntness of his broad face. Its prying eye revealed an empty right sleeve in his padded soldier's coat, a soggy burden on his other shoulder. It did not hide The Woman's burden, either, the heavy burden of hr clumsy tired body under the half-closed military coat she wor over her gown. Her pale lips parted as she drew in each careful, measured breath. From under the shadow of the thick black bangs of her short hair, dark eyes looked out, wide and staring as a weary child's.

The torch bearer cursed. "*Lan Min!* Wretched people, refugees!" he said. Metal struck metal as he switched off his torch and it swung against his gun.

The Man straightened himself. His voice was low and clear. "*Chung-kuo ren; bai bing*. Chinese people; disbanded soldiers," he said, futility and heartbreak and unutterable pride in the words he spoke.

The Woman moved restively as though she could not help herself, but must be toiling toward that place which was always just ahead.

"We have been coming and coming, along The River, sometimes walking and sometimes by boat," she said, the memory of the long toilsome journey they had come in the sound of her voice.

"I was a soldier, and she too," The Man explained. "But there is no use for half a soldier like this in the ranks, or for a woman with child. From the village we can go more quickly across the land than when we had to stay close to The River. Perhaps there is a place for people like us in the free hills beyond."

"Go then," said the sentry, "but there is danger in the village. The sky is clearing and there will be raids."

The road became rougher, stony. On it were bits of fallen debris and uprooted cobblestones left from a wrecked and abandoned part of the city. The Man could faintly discern ruined walls, the rubble of burned buildings, ghostly and silent. Mingled with the smell of rain was the faintly acrid odor of charred things and the lingering unhealthy city

smell—refuse and decay and old gutters—that even fire and destruction could not quite wipe out. The Man and The Woman made their way about the wreckage to an open space.

Behind boarded shop-fronts lining the quiet streets of the village, Chinese life was going on as usual, closed in and slumbering now. But the skies were clearing, and the village, all unaware, sprawled naked and unprotected there, at the edge of the hills, under the white light of the full of the moon.

The Woman looked up to the sky, to this bright moon that had kept its face hidden when the way was hazardous. There was that in her face which defied suffering and danger; something fiercely living that was of birth and struggle and gladness. She whispered . . . "it must soon be that the waiting will be over, and I shall bring forth the child . . ."

At the imminence of her travail, The Man was filled with terror, for he only dimly understood the mystery of the thing that held her in its inexorable grip.

A man coming from some shadowy doorway ran shouting past them, where The Woman sagged against the wall. Jarring peals from a brass gong broke through the quiet; and fainter, but as insistent, another gong in a nearby part of the city took up the clamor. Then from many places the alarm echoed and re-echoed through the city, beating and humming and mingling itself into a strident summons for the village folk to seek shelter from advancing danger in the sky.

It seemed to The Man that there were informing voices all around that shouted to each other, "*Gin bao!* The alarm! Planes are coming!" as half-dressed scurrying people ran into the street.

The little, never-still voice inside him said the words, too, and, "*Hurry-hurry-hurry!*" it told him, "*They are coming to catch you . . . to put this wildness in your head . . . pains in your body. Coming to bury The Woman there, under the bricks and stone . . . bricks and stone.*"

In the confusion he would have fallen trying to support The Woman's limp weight with his one arm, but that some strong arm went around her, some voice urged them on— "to the ditch beyond the hill." It was a coarse, fat woman, clothed in loose bright silk, reeking of wine. Her face was nearly hidden in a disorder of thick black hair grotesquely graced with a dangling ornament of withered white cassia flowers.

They stumbled down the street, these three together, The deathly pale wounded man, the woman with child, and the fat bawd.

The ditch beyond the hill was shoulder-high, cut out of the seeping clay. The Fat One pushed on to a reinforced cave shelter at the far end of it. Long heavy rough-hewn beams supported its sides and top. One of the supports at the mouth was a massive carved post from a ruined temple, jagged and broken at the top.

"*Like a big grave,*" The Man thought, "*all prepared,*" for indeed in the glimmering lantern light the garish red and gold laquered post was the color of coffins.

"*But no lime*," he thought. "*No white lime to make the bones clean.*"

The Fat One laughed, lowering The Woman to the ground. "This child will be a man-child, sure. Firecrackers they will put off, even before he comes, that one! Japanese bombs, firecrackers for the new man-child."

The second alarm was sounding now, urgent alarm, and all the little noises and lights went dead. Feeling so weak and crazy in the head, The Man squatted on his heels.

There was a sort of animal comfort in the warm proximity of the crowded people in this shelter. Kerosine smoke from extinguished lanterns, damp smell of oil-cloth bundles, and the closely-packed human smell of bodies, all mingled, rising faintly sweet and warm.

Everyone listened for the sudden noise of the attack, waiting, shifting from one foot to the other, as animals do, waiting for a storm to break.

All at once the held-in noises were loosed—of anti-aircraft batteries from the hills, thunder rolling from place to place—of whining, racing motors—of sharp whistles,—of crashing "bursting eggs."

The pressure of swift air rushing against The Man's ears met the heavier pressure in his lungs and throat. For a still moment everything seemed to be squeezed out of him, then in a rush hurled back again. Inside his head a quivering began. A great fist reached down and clenched itself into his bowels, into a tight lump. Fire pricked across his chest, down his arm. Then suddenly the clenched fist let go. Everything gave way. Nausea swept through him in rhythmic waves.

The ships were gone on, swinging toward the river port, to circle for another visit. Earth rattled to the floor of the shelter. Someone retched. Red glow from incendiary bombs grew brighter.

The Man could not summon the strength to rise from his haunches, but squatted there, head sagging. Surging within him was the anger of the helpless, the familiar growing anger and hate nothing could relieve. "*Little bandy-legged monkey devils!*" he thought. "*Cursed little fiends! What does this all mean to you up there?*" . . .

He could see, as in a dream, how it would be, high in the air, white stars and moon near . . . the silver-dusted landscape wheeling below them . . . . serene terraced fields, huddled village homes, green-shadowed groves, undulating temple-dotted hills . . . now a swift dip toward the turning landscape that whirled to meet your plane, and a quick turn back into the heart of the star-dimpled sky . . . and then leveling out, to see in the fading distance little mushroom puffs spring up from the heart of the village, red flowers of the incendiaries bloom in the night . . .

A clod of earth fell close to his hand, and he reached out and took hold of it and drew strength from it, so that the anger and fear receded suddenly as it had come. Clasped close to his breast the earth seemed to vow a deep vow. It gave him back the sweet and fertile smell of upturned fields, and told him voicelessly, "*This much is indestructible.*"

"*Yes!*" he thought. "*Mountains and plains and valleys will green into life again; the pheasant will lift his raucous voice from the valley, the musk*

deer bark from the hill, and from the marshland the frog and goose still call unceasingly."

In the dark he smiled. He smiled and bared his teeth, and hurled his wordless challenge to the oncoming planes. "*Me you can kill, but the land will rise up forever, and yet a little the Sons of Han!*

"*The land you can win for a little space, by bending your will to it, to its summer smiles and its winter frowns; but it stays, and you pass on.*

"*Though you plow this Middle Kingdom, and make it your field, the seeds of the Sons of Han are planted here, and they will spring up again, and in time choke out the alien seed.*"

Anti-aircraft spat fire from the hills again. The earth trembled with the detonation of "bursting eggs." The timbers creaked and shook. He reached out his hand until he felt The Woman's damp hair between his fingers. "*Do not die, My Flesh!*" his heart cried. "*Together we have come the long way. Do not leave me, My Flesh!*"

The Woman put her hand for a moment against his sleeve. "*Rest your heart,*" the gentle pressure seemed to say, "*I will not leave you.*"

He settled down. The raiders circled a last time, and passed on. People drowsed placidly until the next onslaught. Now and again he touched The Woman's hair. "*Soft hair, like silk,*" he thought, smiling. . .

The first time he had seen her, he remembered, he might have thought she was a boy, dressed in soldier's uniform, a soldier's cap on her head, but that her hair showed below the cap, instead of being shaved off like the others.

His smile widened. Her cold gaze was a challenge to anyone to mock her for being a woman. It barely flicked over him when she demanded that he lead her to the Commander. She was always a soldier to be feared and respected, "Till that day of the great retreat," he thought.

He remembered the confusion of trying to move a whole army from the sector. Her first defeat had been that night when the Commander would not be swayed from his resolve to abandon the hopelessly wounded to the mercy of paid boatmen who would surely desert them. Pain and anger lurked in her eyes all that night. . .

Before we left we burned the city, all of it, down to the ground, and the fields around it, everything that would burn, and the fled. The great three-span bridge, pride of wrought steel, we felled with one blow; even while the stragglers of our own army were still crossing; and left them there, impaled on the naked ribs. We went, and all along the way we pillaged and plundered, and left the scorched earth dying . . .

Night long the slow troop train had crept forward. When the enemy planes came he had helped her to climb the embankment, and they had lain in the tall green grass. The sun was floating bloody red above a rising sea of mist over a swamp. Though glistening planes swooped down on them, a Hua-Mei had sung from a bush.

When the bombs had begun to fall, he threw his arm across her shoulder, as though to ward off the blows. She had said nothing, but

pressed her face against his hand. Yet he knew that the pain of his heart, and the bewildered thoughts of his mind were as hers, for when he drew away his hand, it had been wet with her tears . . .

And so he mused, thinking back to the good things. But there was no long peace, for The Woman cried out sharply in the quiet. In an instant The Fat One knelt by her side. Her's were the sure strong hands from which The Woman drew strength.

"My one hand will do no good, and my fear is greater than hers," he thought, half in anger. "But this great fat shameless creature has skill, and strength, and good hands to help." His heart suddenly went out to The Fat One in thankfulness, as it had in loathing when he had first seen her.

He went to a place near the entrance, lurching over the unresisting sprawled bodies of people who slept fitfully in the false security of the dim quiet between attacks, and squatted beside some sort of coarse fellow who was going through the familiar ritual of smoking a water pipe, calmly, as though he were squatting to rest by some peace-time street. Even above the sweet smell of the smoke puffs, he reeked of garlic and sweat.

"You have been here long?" The Man asked.

Speaking in low rolling country talk, the stranger said stolidly, "Yes I stay here. A little business here, a little business there, enough to keep the belly full." He shrugged, and spat on the ground. "When it is ordained, my time will come. I stay."

Again The Woman cried out. Though it was not a great cry, but one muffled and unwilling, The Man heard it.

"Yours?" the coolie asked, in the calm tone one says, "Your field? your pipe? your woman?"

"Yes," The Man answered wearily.

The coolie flicked away the burnt pellet of sweet tobacco. Slowly he rolled another between his thumb and forefinger, placed it in the little hole, touched the smouldering punk from the container to the new pellet, and drew a few smoke puffs through the water with a gurgle.

"That is good," he approved at last, absently repeating the age-old echo, "A woman should bear sons! That is the good thing."

Then the country fellow cleaned out his pipe and tucked it into his smelly bundled-up blue cloth jacket. He rubbed his shaved head, sighed, and passed the word on that his ears heard the Big-Bursting-Eggs,Machines coming.

They came, and in the midst of the confusion of sounds a sharp crack sounded overhead, and an explosion, ending in a long, crescendo whine. Then across the still-visible piece of sky, The Man saw the awesome spectacle of a great flaming fallen star that trailed ruddy billowing smoke clouds behind it.

In The Man gladness mounted to exultation as the plane crashed against the farther hill. This was a sight! There were enemies in there, they were seeking the little people's death, and it was good that the enemy

had died! Yet the thing was full of awe, the mind returned with insistent curiosity and shameful clarity. How had they felt, the men in the plane, powerless like that, rushing with their flaming fate through moonlit air?

The country fellow voiced his thought. "If one could know what was happening, could he feel glad to die?" "No," the simple fellow went on, "a man could not feel big enough for all the thing; little, perhaps, and wanting his life back before it was gone, or without anything in him but the sounds and feels that meet the body . . ."

"No, one would not wish to die," The Man thought.

The unforgettable faces of the dead he had encountered one way or another flashed painfully across his inner eye. There were the crafty cruel faces, the scholarly, hurt faces, the broad toilers' faces, the proud arrogant faces, coming back to him from that place where he had thought to hide them past rising again; old hard faces, young trapped faces . . . "and *your* face, your unseen, ever changing face," he thought. "Where is yours?" swept anew by the mingled shame and hate and love.

His hand felt of his bandaged head, his honorable mark. Already it was healing. "Will the hidden hurt, inside, heal too?" he questioned.

Back swept his mind relentlessly to that past bit of time that nothing could wipe out. "No, I will not understand, but still I will remember and remember."

Remember the hot inflaming hate that seized him when he saw that boatload of dying soldiers machine-gunned from low-flying Japanese planes.

Remember how he had owed a vow to the other guerillas, to wreak vengeance that night in watery Japanese blood.

It was then that he took the pointed instrument, carefully considering its advantages against those of the club that a two-armed man could wield so silently and well. Noiselessly, on light, sure feet, he passed into the enemy territory. When he saw the darker shadow of the Japanese sentry, he thought out the direction and movement of the blow, how he must strike sure and deep, with his body's weight behind it. Carefully he tensed himself, waiting for his quarry to turn, as he must. Feeling something there in the night, the sentry whirled, seeming to rise to meet the blow . . .

Feeling again the sickening scrape of the knife on bone, The Man thought, "*Why did I wait? Why did I not go then, with the hate and lust for blood surging through my body?*"

But he had not gone, for the man had not died then, nor had he screamed. He had sunk slowly to the ground, his little clutching hands passing down the length of The Man's body, sobbing and whispering senseless words in a strange tongue, with such hopelessness and resignation in their sound that The Man had been swept with a revulsion of pity and contempt.

Against his will, he knelt in the mire by the little Japanese, who was gurgling now, and tugging at the knife. Clasping the bony, claw-like hand of the Japanese in his, he drew fiercely against the unyielding knife till suddenly it let go. The sentry sobbed his strange bubbling sobs, asking

the questions no one could answer.

With his one arm The Man lifted him, clasped him, and held him close to his own chest, suddenly desiring with all his desire to ward off the advancing death.

Again in memory they were clutching each other in the terror and passion of the struggle till with a bubbling sigh the little man's life poured itself out on his enemy's sheltering breast . . .

Again in memory The Man was calling, "*Blood for blood!*" to the listening night; again running, running from the hue and cry of pursuing voices, running from his own mingled shame and hate, love and passion; running, wounded and wild; running and weeping and calling "*blood for blood . . .* "

Abruptly another raid was upon them. The planes came close. Guided by the light from the burning plane, they sought to find those who had shot it down. Very close came the planes, but they swooped up again as crashing bombs burst all about the shelter.

The awful fury of the impact lifted the people in the shelter and threw them on the ground, this way and that. The earth heaved and shook and fell, the timbers creaked, and rose, and slowly settled back in place.

Everyone was very still, dazed from the noise and impact. When The Man could think, when the inner roaring of his ears had died out, he heard an angry protesting new-born sound, strange little animal bleats of lusty complaint.

Though the people laughed in hysterical relief, The Man could not shake off the numb weariness and defeat. The country fellow chuckled. "A woman should bear sons," he repeated. "That is the good thing," and spat, and lit his water pipe again.

The Fat One was laughing in The Man's ear. "Gung hseh! Gung hseh!" she said in a high good humor, "congratulations for a first-born man-child." The Fat One shoved The Woman's wadded coat into the crook of his arm.

The bundle stirred. He squatted, clasping it close to his neck, alarmed lest, with his one arm he drop it. Noises, little grunts, came from the middle of the bundle. The musty-smelling damp little face of his son, that breathed in mewling whimpers, moved against his face.

In the searchings of this tiny fragile thing he recognized the full strength of life, the indomitable will to live. A tiny fist beat aimlessly against his face. The new voice cried out strongly.

Pride, and something like a hope broke forth in The Man. Though he was weary it was with a kind of eagerness that The Man raised his eyes to watch for some first hazy light of dawn upon the free hills beyond.

ALWAYS OVERTURES

Always are endings, always overtures——
Scenario of nonsense, acts of dismay,
The quick, the slow curtain, the interlude——
A macaronic, tragi-comic play.

Turbid cities of our homeland lighted
Magic faces over cocktail bars——
Fading faces, downy sacrifices
To defenders, giddiness of wars.

The sudden friends, now old ones are so scattered,
Dwindle with the footlights in the trough.
You saw what could have been (essential magnet)
If rules of battle gave you time enough.

Austral islands, school-book islands, press
Their jungles round each camp, press to blind
The weeding eye. You have them now, just as
You did —— the tangled faces far behind.

Man talk with your friends, sweettalk your girls,
But someone leaves, someone is left, endures
The jungle of characters, the jig-saw scenes,
The always endings, always overtures.

HUBERT CREEKMORE

TO THE LAST GENERATION

The patient spent a quiet afternoon
The syphilis chancre did not appear
Upon the upper lip, the point of inflamation
Did not spread, the patient spent a quiet
Afternoon, the patient, sir, is dead

It is not necessary now
To bring the book and read the final verse
To raise the blinds and move
The pillows for his head, it is not
Necessary, sir, the man is dead

Paresis showed within his wobbling
Walk the stumbling second just before
He fell, the spirochetes were
Bullets, sir, his blood is on your head
You knew him, sir, and now the man is dead

You gave this man depression syrup and
Munich pills, nonintervention shots
O doctor father sir some cure instead
Of this I'd recommend for your son's son.
The War Department wires your son is dead.

DELL R. SKEELS

The Willow Fields

By WILLIAM MARCH

When she answered the bell and saw her sister there at the door, Mrs. Niven drew back in dismay and laughed softly. "I declare Agnes," she said; "I was just on my way to visit Nettie Rodney upstairs. A minute later and you wouldn't have found me in." Then, her hand still grasping the knob, she explained about Nettie, and why she didn't like to break the appointment with her.

Mrs. Rodney, it appeared, had been widowed only a few weeks before, so naturally she was still heart sick and lonely. Then, too, she had no people of her own to turn to in her sorrow—no children, either, and that made things harder, Mrs. Niven thought. "So I run up for a visit every afternoon about this time," she went on, "and Nettie makes tea, and we talk—or rather Nettie talks, and I listen."

The sisters stood in the small vestibule, sighing and shaking their heads. They were much alike in appearance, both of them being bony, solidly built women who seemed capable of turning even the heaviest mattress with one quick, efficient flip of their wrists. "But why don't you come along with me?" Mrs. Niven asked suddenly. "Nettie will be glad to have somebody new to talk to. She talks about her husband mostly, and I've heard it all so many times."

And so, shoving their durable busts before them, the sisters went into the hall and ascended the fragile, uncarpeted stairs. Nettie Rodney, hearing the noise of their feet, came to her own landing and peered down the stair-well. "You're a new one, Dora Niven," she called out gaily, I was ready to ring up the police and get out a search warrant to find you."

She was plump and middle-aged, and as she watched the heads of her visitors rise higher and higher toward her, she jerked her body from side to side with the coquettish, sudden gestures of a robin. She was wearing a bright print dress with short sleeves, and the powdered flesh of her forearms, as she bent forward and rested her elbows on the stair rail, had the fluted, bluish-white appearance of a plucked hen. Her hair had recently been bleached yellow and elaborately-waved. Her lips, cheeks and finger-nails were an indiscriminate scarlet.

Dora said, when they were inside Mrs. Rodney's apartment "This is my sister Mrs. Agnes Nicolson. She lives in Jackson Heights, and she

dropped in unexpectedly just a few minutes ago; so I brought her along with me, knowing you wouldn't mind."

"I hope it wasn't an imposition," said Agnes, "seeing that you've just sustained a loss. What I mean is, people in mourning generally want to be by themselves until—" She paused in confusion, realizing at that instant that Mrs. Rodney was most plainly not in mourning. Nettie, feeling that an explanation was expected of her, hesitated and then said, "Fred didn't believe in making a show of your feelings."

"Fred was her husband," said Dora unnecessarily.

Nettie jumped up from her chair and placed one finger against her crimson lips. "The water!" she said in a high, vivacious voice. "It's boiling away on the stove!" She hurried to her kitchen, and a moment later the sisters heard her arranging cups and saucers on a tray.

"She doesn't have to worry about money the way some widows do," said Dora solemnly, "because Fred left her comfortably off." She lowered her voice and listened, then realizing that Nettie would be busy for the next few minutes, she recited the salient facts of Mr. Rodney's past in a hollow, hushed voice. He had had a good job with an insurance company, and he had been in the same position for many years. He had been a real family man, not caring about outside company and hardly drinking at all, or throwing his money to the winds, the way many did. Nettie had always given into him and pampered him in little ways. Maybe that was a mistake—tying yourself so close to a man, no matter what good qualities he had. Maybe it would have been better if she'd gone out and made friends of her own. Maybe if she had done that she wouldn't feel his loss so terribly now.

"Why, she seems real gay and unconcerned to me," said Agnes. "I would never call her a grief-stricken woman."

"It's all show," said Dora. "She's taking his death very hard, but of course she's got to keep going as best she can."

At that moment their hostess returned with the tea, and Agnes changed the conversation abruptly. She said: "I see they're showing *Commandoes from the Sky* in this neighborhood. I saw it last week. It's a good picture I thought."

Nettie put down the cups and saucers and turned quickly. "Now, that's a coincidence," she said: "Your mentioning moving pictures, I mean . . . You see, Fred was crazy about them. It was the only thing that interested him much; that and reading the papers. He read three different ones after he got home at night."

She opened her compact and examined her makeup; then, sighing inaudibly, she went back for the teapot and the sugar. When she returned she poured tea for her guests with complete absorption, her toe tapping nervously against the rug.

"I always thought Fred missed his calling when he went into insurance," she said. "A man with so much appeal for the ladies, and with such a handsome face and fine figure, should have been on the stage. He

joked about it when I brought it up, and said he'd only make a fool of himself, because he didn't know the first thing about acting. And so I used to tell him, 'But you don't have to know anything about acting. A good director could teach you all the tricks and movements in no time.'"

Agnes, who had pictured Mr. Rodney as another type of man entirely, spoke in surprise: "Was your husband as good looking as all that? I didn't realize."

Nettie smiled and nodded toward a table which stood against the wall a table entirely bare except for a photograph which had plainly been posed and tinted by someone who believed with his whole being in the camera as a medium of artistic expression.

Agnes straightened up and twisted her head, examining the photograph with cocentrated care. The face which stared back at her from the inexpensive frame was that of a plump, middle-aged man whose features were small, glum and unobtrusive. His hair was thin but still dark, and it had been plastered fiercely to his skull, with two small almost circular curls on either side of the part. His eyes were fixed and somehow intolerant behind the glasses he wore, and his lips pursed slightly, as if he had contemplated making a suggestion or two to the photographer, but had thought better of it.

"You see?" said Nettie. "You see what I mean?"

Then, as if her words had evoked thoughts too near the surface, emotions too powerful to be easily controlled, she passed the sugar and cream needlessly, repeating under her breath all the things which Fred had said about showing your grief in public. Dora and her sister glanced at each other, and then, staring again at the elaborate, tinted photograph, they smiled cautiously and shook their heads.

Agnes was the first to break the silence. "Where did you find such a nice frame?" she asked. "It's real leather, isn't it?"

"I got it after he died," said Nettie. "I looked and looked until I found that shade of green. It isnt exactly right, but it was the closest I could come to what I really wanted. Green was always his favorite color. I mean that real bright shade of green—the color of grass in spring, or of willow trees coming out." She leaned forward with eagerness now, and her words came in a rush, as if she could no longer keep them bottled up in herself.

"Now, here's something I wouldn't tell just anybody, for fear they'd laugh, or think it sounded crazy, but Fred had a peculiar notion in his head, and he used to talk about it sometime. I suppose it wasn't so much a *notion* as it was a sort of *picture*, if you know what I mean. . . . Anyway, the thing that bothered him at times was whether he'd really seen the picture, or whether it was something he'd made up in his mind."

Agnes put down her cup with a small clatter. "What was it, Mrs. Rodney?" she asked excitedly. "What kind of a picture did he see?"

"It was a place out in the country," said Nettie, "and the main thing about it was the fact that it was so untroubled and silent. There was a

white farmhouse and a sign which read: THE WILLOW FIELDS; and all about the house there were sloping meadows so green that you couldn't believe your eyes. There was a stream of water running through the fields, with clumps of willow trees growing along its banks. It was all so strange, and yet it was real too in a way. He could see it so plainly, and if he told me about it once, he told me about it a hundred times.

Agnes, who had expected something more dramatic, said in a vigorous voice: "Maybe he really did see such a place. When he was a little boy, perhaps, before you two met."

Nettie shook her head instantly, as if she had long anticipated this solution and was prepared for it. "No," she said. "No, it couldn't have been that way. You see, Fred was born right here in New York City and his mother told him, when he asked her about it, that he'd never left the city at all when he was young—not even to go to Brooklyn."

"I think it was something he imagined in his mind," said Dora. "What else could it have been?"

Nettie leaned back in her chair and pleated her dress with her white, nervous fingers. "Anyway," she said "Fred believed that such a place existed somewhere. He meant to go look for it some day, after he'd retired from business and had more time."

She got up suddenly and went to the kitchen. She returned with fresh cream and a pitcher of hot water, and when she had refilled the teapot and taken her seat again, Agnes said: "Your husband really fell in love with that place didn't he? It must have made a great impression on his mind."

Nettie did not speak at once, but after she had replenished the cups, she nodded twice and answered, making her voice as casual as she could "Yes, that's very true." She leaned back in her chair and rested her forehead against her palm. She felt herself sinking, despite her will, into the despair which seemed always to wait for her. With determination she straightened up again and forced her lips to smile. Afterwards she talked rapidly, compulsively, going over and over the trivial details of her trivial life. She talked on and on, her shallow eyes desperate and staring, her plucked, powdered forearms digging into the upholstery of her chair; but at last her guests rose to leave, and standing there on the landing once more, she watched until they were out of sight, knowing at that moment that her whole day had been lived through in anticipation of this casual visit.

When she heard Mrs. Niven's door close, she came back into her own apartment and stood before the photograph in its green frame, moving it forward a little so that the late sunlight brought out its details more clearly; then she carried the dishes out, washed them and put them away. When that task was done, there was nothing to do until she cooked her supper; afterwards there would be nothing to do until it was time for her to go to bed.

Without thought, with no definite plan in her mind, she went into

her bedroom and put on the dress she had bought a few days before. It was made of some soft, clinging material; it was years too young for her, and its color was an intense, clamorous green. Her dyed yellow hair, arranged so elaborately above the green of the dress, gave her the appearance of a rumpled and ornate buttercup.

Later, she tried to read, but she could not; and pressing her palms flatly against her cheeks she went to the window and looked down at the street, watching the dense, five-o'-clock-crowd hurrying to their individual and unknown destinations. There were so many people in the world, she thought: So many people, and she meant nothing to any of them. "But they mean nothing to me, either," she said aloud. "Nothing at all." She found this thought too dreadful to face, and moving back into the room, she stretched out on her sofa, her hands locked and tense between her bulging knees, her bright green dress outlining the plump curve of her body.

She had not slept well since her husband's death, but now she had a feeling of drowsiness, as if she wished to escape, somehow, from the shrill, relentless thoughts which beset her mind. She turned on her back and adjusted the pillows against her head, thinking vaguely of Mrs. Niven and Agnes Nicolson. She wondered if she had been indiscreet in speaking so freely to them—if, after all, she had not made herself absurd. She was not sure, but Fred would know, if he were alive, and he would tell her at once. . .

She sighed and turned slowly on the couch. The sounds from the street seemed farther and farther away, and a moment later even the familiar room became blurred and remote . . . Then, strangely, although she was not in the least surprised, she found the farmhouse which Fred had looked for, and at once she thought: "It was not a dream after all. May God forgive me for having doubted him." She looked about her thoughtfully, speaking softly to herself. "There is the sign outside the house," she said. "There are the wide, green fields and the willows growing in clumps along the stream."

She turned slowly, staring with a sense of incredulous delight, and at that instant she saw her husband plainly. He was standing alone, at the edge of the farthest field, and he looked precisely as he had when she first met him. She started forward in her eagrness, and stretching her arms wide, she ran toward him, without effort, through all that sea of bright young green. She felt there was something both definitive and overwhelming which she should say to him, but she could not remember what it was: she could only cry out, "Fred! Fred!" in a thin, tremulous voice; but when she reached the place where he was standing, and lifted her hands to touch his face, she awoke from her dream with a nervous start, shuddered and sat up straight on the sofa, thinking that she would never be able to move again. She sat there as if dazed for a long time, her hands pressed tightly against her face . . .

It was then she remembered a conversation with her husband many years ago. "Even if you did find the willow fields again," she had said,

"you'd probably be so old and tired out that you wouldn't care whether you went there or not. That's the way things usually work out in this world."

"I'd still want to go there," he said, "no matter how old or tired I was at the time. I'd go there all right, no matter what the circumstances were—even if I had to come back from the grave to do it."

"No, no, Fred!" she had answered. "You mustn't say such things, even in fun. They're sacrilegious!" But he had only laughed his odd, individual laugh and continued stubbornly: "I'd do it though, just as sure as you're a foot high."

It was dark in the living room now, but she did not turn on the lights. There were no sounds from the street at all, and even the small, intimate noises of the house itself had ceased. In this complete, waiting stillness she could hear the sound her own breath made, the tiny, scratching sound of her stockings as they pressed together. She got up from the couch, and for a time she stood in the center of the room in complete and waiting passivity; but when she could bear her thoughts no longer, she turned and went to the bedroom which she and her husband had shared for so many years, to the chest of drawers which still held his intimate belongings.

His shirts were arranged neatly in row, just as he had left them. From one of the shirts she took a piece of rought, grayish cardboard which the launderer had put there to hold it firm; and then, her mouth tight with her desperation, she found a pencil and printed boldly on the surface of the board: THE WILLOW FIELDS.

Without pausing to consider, her eyes wide and frightened at the audacity of the thing she meant to do, she opened the door of her apartment and fixed the sign there with a thumb tack. She drew back against the wall, but she left the door open a little so that nothing would impede his progress when he came back to her. She patted her curls into place and rearranged her silly, bright green dress seductively. "Here I am," she said softly. "Here, by the door." . . .

She waited there in the dark for a long time, her breath coming irregularly in thin, quick rushes, her puckered, dead-white hands making small, meaningless gestures. Then, realizing that her throat was dry and constricted, she started for the bathroom to get a glass of water. She recognized the stuffed chair, the smoking stand and the big, metal lamp as she passed and fumbled them for an instant; but when her hands touched the photograph on the polished table, she trembled so that she sank slowly to the floor. In the darkness she rested her yellow, elaborately curled head against the edge of the table. "Here I am," she said. "Here." . . .

She got up after a while and went to the bathroom. She turned on the light above the basin, examining her rouged, harrassed face in the mirror. Automatically she fumbled for her compact, but such a feeling of distaste came over her at that instant that she never completed the gesture. Instead, she leaned back against the towel rack, stared at her own

reflection, and wept. "Old woman!" she cried fiercely. "Old woman! Old woman!"

She could no longer endure the sight of her own face and she walked quickly away from the mirror; but when she came into the living room again, and stood there in indecision, as if she could no longer recall the purposes which impelled her, her knees collapsed beneath her and she fell forward against the rug, knowing clearly at that moment that no matter how senseless her husband's death seemed, nor how gratly she longed for his return, he would not come back to her.

Then, slowly, she turned her face and gave way completely to grief, but even in that bitter moment of realization she found excuses for him, for she said to herself over and over: "But why should he? Why should he come back to a silly, impossible old woman like me?"

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The One and Only Appearance of Jeez Christ On Sun Mountain

By JARVIS THURSTON

It's eighty years now since Jeez Christ made His One and Only Appearance on Sun Mountain, and already His appearance is so hedged around by tales that it's hard for a person to know what's a lie and what isn't. The Sun Mountain Gospelers, down in southern California now, say that He was killed, but got up on the third day and went to heaven, leaving behind Him, so they put it, His Words for the Latter Days; they say He revealed His True Gospel then, which is that man should live closer to nature, build homes in trees, eat nuts and raw vegetables, and have sex only in the spring. The Reorganized Sun Mountain Gospelers, which took off from the others, agree about nuts and homes and sex, but claim that Christ wasn't shot at all, that He turned the bullet around in mid-air and killed "Red" Powers and then went up in a blaze of light. They put much more weight on the miracles He did on Sun Mountain. They say He held out His hand and stopped the wind, that He brought the 'Frisco Kid back to life after he was shot by a cardsharp in the Sawdust Saloon, and that He fixed up the eyesight of several miners blinded in a mine explosion, and that He worked lots of miracles of all kinds, and drove out lots of devils.

Of course, as it always happens, there are those who poke fun at the whole thing, saying that it wasn't Christ at all, but a prospector that went mad in the heat of Forty Mile Desert. That's what Grampa used to say, but I don't know that you can trust him either, even though he was there, for he never was much of a church-goer. Besides he had an eye for making things tall as I've seen. Some of the stories he used to tell over and over again and I could see that he changed them from one time to the next, adding bits here and there and dropping other bits out, all of which didn't seem to bother him any. He'd say, "Yes siree, every damn word of it's true, every damn word. That's just the way it happened."

I was about thirteen when he told me the Christ story. It was a cold winter day on our Idaho farm and Grampa got tired sitting around the house and wanted to get out. I had to help him get on his coats, about four or five of them—that's not counting the sweaters—all of them old and ragged with about half the buttons missing. He always wanted the longest one on first and then the others, ending up with the shortest. He said it gave a man room around the shoulders that way. When I started to tuck his two

pairs of trousers inside his galoshes, Grampa said, "Take 'em out. They don't look good thataway. Messy, that's what it is!" Well, we went out to the barn and I threw some hay down for the horses, and Grampa curried Old Pete, so old he really ought to have been shot for coyote bait, but Grampa wouldn't have it. "Why he's the best damn horse on the place. That's one horse yuh can't even balk on a dead pull." After he finished fussying around with Old Pete, we went into the harness shed and Grampa asked me to get his rifle down from a couple nails on the wall. It was an old piece that had been handled so much one couldn't read what kind of gun it was anymore. I never knew what caliber it was, but it had a muzzle that would make a .30-.30 look like a beebe gun. With all his coats on he couldn't hold it up to his shoulders so I helped hold it up by the barrel while he squinted along the sights. "I ain't a braggin' man," he said, "but in them there days I could shoot the white out of yer eye at two hundert paces. But at that, I couldn't hold a pisspot up tuh Brewster Howes. The time he hadit out with "Red" and "Bonanza" Johnny, yuh couldn't even see 'im draw. . ." And that brought Grampa around to the One and Only Appearance of Jeez Christ. I couldn't hope to tell the story exactly as he told it, sitting there with that old rifle across his knees, for he went at a story like a dog worrying a snake, jumping around and around, not quite knowing where to tackle it, and making lots of false starts and getting tied up with dates and names that really didn't matter much, but he wouldn't give up, no matter if in getting things right he had to trace a man's family tree back to Adam—no matter how many "let's see now, that musta been 'bout the time that Will Smith got kicked in the back by that spavined bay mare of his—no, that wasn't the time, 'cause . . ." But once he got all the dates and names right he would quit worrying around and jump in and grab and shake like hell. Anyway, this is what Grampa told me about the time Jeez appeared on Sun Mountain.

Sun Mountain's in Nevada. About as godforsaken a mountain as you'll find anywhere, nothing but sage, alkali dust, coyotes, and lizards, with the sun hotter than hell by twenty degrees and the wind strong enough to rip your pants off if you'd ever be so careless as to leave your fly open. Washoe "zephyrs," the Virginny City boys used to call them. The Chinks up there who did the washing for the miners used to fly kites, but they had to use cellar doors for kites and log chains for strings. Why, one time Pete Stringham was sitting in his stocking feet on his porch when he looked up and saw his only burro flying through the air on a high wind. It saw Pete, switched its tail and brayed, but there wasn't a damn thing Pete could do, but watch with tears in his eyes till it flew out of sight. On account of that mineral dust and wind there weren't any birds up there, so the boys called the burros Washoe "canaries." Washoe's the name of the mountain range.

Everything upon Sun Mountain was as big as the wind, or bigger. Ore ran to $3,000 a ton, Virginny City clung like a mountain goat to the side of a hill so steep that a man could sit on his pants and slide from one

street level to another, and the boys were as wild and tough as they come. They didn't take to any of this sissy fun. They had their badger fights and dog fights, or laid bets on a wildcat tossed in a pen with a bulldog, or a cinnamon bear against four hounds. Most of the boys liked rooster-pullings too, a dollar against a dollar for any man that could pull a leg off a live rooster. And Jim Beagle, a blacksmith, used to amuse the boys with some tame ducks that got sort of friendly after he'd fed them pieces of raw liver. Then when a good crowd had gathered around, he'd toss them chips of red-hot iron, and the boys would laugh themselves sick watching the ducks swallow the chips, for the iron would burn a hole through their crops and fall out on the ground at their feet. The boys got a big kick out of that.

When somebody found silver and gold on the side of Sun Mountain in '59, the news spread like fire through dry wheat. Everybody hit out for Washoe—landgrabbers, cattle stiffs, desert rats, paisanos, coolies, muckers, bartenders, gamblers, and flocks of lawyers and doctors. Anyone who had a horse or could steal one dashed for the new diggings. One of them was Brewster Howes who came, so it was said, from a gambling dive in 'Frisco. A tall, young fellow with gold hair and a gold beard and the cleanest blue eyes you ever saw. He already had six notches on his gun butt when he got there. He was a gunman, but not one of those dirty little killers, for he never killed except when he had to. But that was often because of his reputation. He was a "Chief" and there were lots of other little chiefs around that wanted to get him, but all of them were scared after they saw what he did to "Buckskin" John. Buck was out to get him and jumped out from behind the Wells & Fargo building with his gun drawn, but before he could shoot, Brew' had plugged him twice right through the heart. Jumping out like that must have startled Brew', for he wasn't a man to shoot at the same thing twice. Even shooting from the hip he could take the leg off a fly at thirty paces. Most of the time he didn't even draw, for he didn't use a holster. He had a little knob welded on his six-shooter just back of the cylinder and this knob fitted into a slotted piece of metal on his belt. Nothing like it had ever been seen around Virginny City before he came.

They say he was a Harvard man and came to 'Frisco after he got into some trouble back East, but nobody knew for sure. He was a soft-spoken fellow, and always wore a long-tailed coat and a stovepipe hat except when he was working in the Gentry as a broadtosser. He was a square dealer, though, and nobody was ever afraid of being cheated when he was dealing. Everybody liked Brew' for he minded his own business and did everyone a favor by shooting a lot of people that needed shooting.

"Red" Powers, though, was a pea of another kind. He killed just because he liked it, kept his own private burying ground and went around boasting how many he had there. Red used to walk into a bar, pick a quarrel with some friendless miner, grab him by the throat and slit his guts open with a bowie-knife. Then he'd take a nap on a billiard table.

Everybody said, but not to his face, that Red never picked on anybody that could stand up to him. His hair was kind of carroty and he had a long red beard which he braided and tied under his chin. Whenever he walked into a saloon with his big Spanish spurs clinking, everyone stopped talking and pretended they weren't there. But Red kept out of Brew's way, though he boasted plenty what he was going to do to Brew' if they ever tangled. It must have made him madder'n hell to know that everyone knew he was afraid to mix it with Brew'. Red had a sidekick, a greaser called "Bonanza" Johnny, who liked to share in Red's fame and do a little killing for himself on the side. Bonanza boasted too that he was going to kill the "Chief", but he was never seen looking for him. If it hadn't been for the appearance of Jeez Christ they might never have got mixed up with Brew'.

Frank Baldy—he used to run a six-horse stage between Carson and Virginny City till he got himself bunged up when his stage turned over just below Gold Hill. It wouldn't have happened if a tug hadn't broken and scared hell out of his leaders, for, though Baldy was a loose-rein driver, he couldn't be beat. Well, Baldy and Dick Munson were coming up the Geiger Grade herding a pack of burros loaded down with barrels of whiskey for the Crystal Bar, when up ahead around several loops in the grade they saw something white moving. Neither one of them could think what in the hell it could be. In about fifteen minutes they came up to it, and it turned out to be a man. Baldy and Dick pulled up their horses and stared, for the fellow didn't have a stitch on but an old sheet. Not even a hat and it was hot enough to fry an egg on a rock. He was an old fellow with long hair and a beard as white as snow. He was caked with alkali dust from head to foot

"I'll be goddamned," said Baldy. "Where yuh headin' fer, stranger?"

"Knowest thou not," he said, "that Thou shalt not profane the name of thy God. I go unto the Mount of Olives."

"I'll be goddamned," said Baldy, looking at Dick, and then staring at the stranger again. "Well, yer headin' the wrong way, pardner, 'cause this here is Sun Mountain. I've never heerd tell of any Olive Mountains in this here country."

"Tarry me not," the old man answered, "for I go to speak unto multitudes." And he started walking up the grade, wading through dust up to his ankles.

"He's plum locoed," said Dick. "Crazier'n a sheepherder. Look how he's talkin'."

Baldy jabbed a spur into his horse's flank and headed the old man off. "Say, stranger, I ain't one tuh be buttin' intuh other folks' business, but what's yer name and where yuh from?"

The old man looked up from under his heavy eyebrows like a horse under a shaggy forelock. "Have ye not heard a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'? For I am Jesus the Christ who came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me."

"Well, I'll be damned," said Baldy again and swung down off from his horse. "I've heerd tell once that Jeez came ridin' in tuh town on a mule, and us Washoe boys ain't gonna be skunked. We ain't got no mule, nothin' but them desert canaries, but I reckon yuh kin ride one of 'em." Baldy took off the bedding roll from one of the burros and tied it up on back of his own horse. After several jumps Jeez got on and said, as quiet as you please, "Even so, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, the King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass."

Baldy and Dick went up the grade herding the whiskey and the old man. They had crossed the summit and were coming down the other side into Virginny City when Baldy and Dick got to talking it over and decided they could have some fun with Jeez and maybe pick up some change too.

George Lieber, who was running the Melodeon then, used to put on shows for the boys and he always was hard put to it to find something their size. When they didn't get what they wanted, they usually got into fights and broke up everything they could lay their hands on. Lieber's place had a bar along the south side and a stage made out of sawhorses and planks at the back. The seats were nothing but old benches that he got out everytime there was something on, leaving just enough room alongside the bar. That bar, though, was one of the prettiest anyone ever laid his eyes on, real mahogany and every stick of it had been packed in on burros. The mirrors at the back, too, and a big chandelier with glass drops and a dozen or so coal-oil lamps.

Well, Baldy let Dick take the whiskey into Virginny City while he and Jeez cut up the side of the mountain and circled around till they got to Baldy's cabin between Gold Hill and the City. He wanted to get the old man inside, so nobody could see him. Baldy explained it all to Jeez, telling him that in these parts it would take a couple of days to round up all the people. Then he could give his speech.

Baldy worked it all right with Lieber. He was all for it, and plastered the mountainside with signs reading:

THE ONE AND ONLY APPEARANCE OF JEEZ CHRIST
IN
"SERMON ON SUN MOUNTAIN"
MELODEON
ADMISSION – $1.00 SATURDAY – 8:30 P.M.

He put ads in the *Territorial Enterprise* and the *Gold Hill News* and had signs painted on rocks all the way down the mountainside to Gold Hill. The boys coming off shift gathered around the signs and you could hear them shout above the racket of rock crushers, stampers and punchers and the cussings of teamsters. Here was something their size, almost as big as the Washoe zephyrs. By Saturday night there wasn't a bad egg or anything rotting or dead that could be had, not even for a poke of gold dust. Those that couldn't find anything else filled up their pockets with jagged

rocks from the ore dumps.

Saturday night everybody that was able to get in was there and fighting to get drinks at the bar. What few women there were in Virginny City, not counting squaws and Chink women, were there too, sitting on front benches. Red and Bonanza were leaning up against the bar near the stage, and everybody was giving them a wide berth. It seems that Brew must not have worked his way in till much later. When one of Lieber's bartenders lit the lamps, there was a rush for the benches, but there weren't enough seats for half the crowd. They were standing up all around the sides and packed together near the door like bolts and nuts in a box.

Lieber pulled back a little bit the sheets that he used for curtains and started talking. He was one man who had the gift of gab. "You boys know I've never been one to spare labor or money to bring you the best shows in Virginny, or for that matter in the whole country."

"You're a damned liar!" said one of the boys.

Lieber pretended not to hear. "Tonight we have a fellow that I'm sure is the most famous—" Just then one of those zephyrs started up and blew all the lights out. After a lot of fussying, they got the lamps all lit again, but had to turn them down low because the wind was blowing so damn hard it was about to take the roof off. The whole building was shaking like an outhouse in a tornado. After the boys stopped swearing and growling around, Lieber shouted above the wind, "Boys, as I was saying, before one of you bastards sneezed and blew the lights out, tonight we have something special. This is our guest's one and only appearance on the stage." Some of the boys started laughing and those sitting down began putting their eggs and ammunition between their feet in a handy place, afraid they might not get a shot in before it would all be over.

"Our city ought to be honored, for our famous guest, none other than Jeez Christ, has come to . . ."

"We didn't pay a buck tuh listen tuh yer crap!" somebody shouted. Everybody laughed.

The wind kept getting stronger and stronger, and Lieber had to raise his voice a notch or two.

"As I was saying . . ."

"Shut up!" someone shouted, "And fetch Jeez out 'fore we plaster yuh!"

"Yah, that's tellin' 'im," others said, "Get the hell off of that there plankin'! We come to hear Jeez preech."

Red took a step or two toward the stage. Lieber heard his spurs jingling and scurried behind the curtains like a jackrabbit that has just seen a hawk. He shoved back the sheets and there was Jeez, old and tired and kind of sad, like a man who's had lots of tough luck in his time. His eyebrows, the same color as his hair and beard, were so bushy and long that his eyes just looked like dark patches in his bony face.

"Christamighty," someone yelled, "Has he lost his tongue!"

"Jerus'lem Slim," Baldy said, 'Sic' Old Nick on im. Serve 'im right."

The boys roared and stamped their feet.

The old man gazed as if he hadn't heard. Then he raised his right hand, palm out and said in a loud voice that could be heard above the zephyr outside that was still about to blow Sun Mountain over into Utah: 'I charge thee, winds, blow no more!" That struck the boys so funny they knocked each other off the benches and shouted and stamped their feet until you couldn't hear the wind outside. They laughed till there were tears in their eyes. Jeez Christ and the Washoe zephyr!

Baldy jumped up and yelled, "Since Jeez is gonna git rid of our wind, maybe some of us boys could talk 'im in tuh puttin' grass all over the top of Sun Mountain and maybe he'd show us how to turn water in tuh scamper-juice by pravin'." But Baldy had no more than had his say when the wind did stop. No one let out a peep. The boys all had their heads cocked to one side listening to make sure their ears wern't playing tricks on them. Of course, those zephyrs came and went all of a sudden once in a while, but its happening just then made it seem kind of queer.

Jeez lowered his hand and looking over the heads of the boys as if he didn't see them, he began, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit:
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn:
For they shall be comforted."

Everybody's eyes were glued on him. He seemed to say everything as if he meant it in a kind of low voice that made you listen whether you wanted to or not. He went on and on, and no one said anything but Red who was heard by those near him urging Bonanza to pelt Jeez with some rotten eggs. He kept telling him there was nothing to that wind business. It just happened. But Bonanza didn't cotton to the idea at first. And Jeez went on: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say unto you, 'Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if . . ."

By now there was a little whispering going on among the boys, and Red and Bonanza kept arguing and talking until Jeez got to saying: "Take no thought of your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for . . ." Then Red fired a shot into the ceiling and got everybody's attention.

"Boys," he said, "if Jeez is gonna go spielin' on like that he's gotta have somethin' tuh wet his whistle with. He must be mighty dry by now and I aim tuh fix that up by settin' 'im up tuh a drink of Lieber's best."

"Barkeep," he said, "a shot of yer best red-eye fer Jeez." The bartender jumped to pour a drink. Red took the glass, still holding his gun in one hand, and with his Spanish spurs clinking he walked up to the old man, who gave no sign, except he'd stopped talking, that he'd either heard the shot of what Red had been saying. Red climbed upon the stage

and jabbed the whiskey at him, "Jeez, here's somethin' you'd better drink fer yer health." Jeez stood looking sad and tired-like, paying no attention to Red. Red began to feel foolish, standing there holding out the glass, and a few of the boys began laughing. He pushed the glass right up in his face, but still Jeez made no sign that he even knew Red was there. The laughter got louder.

"Well," said Red, "since Jeez has lost his hearin' I reckon he won't be needin' his ears." Stepping back a pace or two, he took aim and shot off part of one of the old man's ears. But Jeez didn't even flick an eyelash, he just stood there with that sort of sad, tired look and the blood running down the side of his face into his beard.

"Boys," said Red, turning around, "I ain't much of a hand at doctorin' but I'll betcha anything yuh wanta bet that that fixed up his hearin'. By God, it's made 'im better lookin' too." Red shoved the whiskey into the old mans face again, but he didn't pay any more attention than a horse does to one mosquito. By then Red had worked himself into quite a rage.

When Bonanza saw that nothing had happened to Red for shooting off Jeez' ear, he took a couple rotten eggs and went up near the stage.

"Maybe it is that his smeller is aworkin'," he said, and splattered a couple of eggs against the old man's stomach. Jeez still didn't budge. He seemed to be waiting until this was all over so he could go on with his speech. Then some of the boys started getting their ammunition out, and some of them were laughing at the egg sliding down the sheet and dripping on Jeez' feet.

"Naah, Bonanza," said Red, "He ain't got a smeller either. I'm bettin' he ain't got guts either." He stepped back, waited a second for Jeez to say something, and then fired two shots that struck him right in the middle of the belly. Jeez doubled over as if he were going to fall on his face but then he pulled himself up again. There were two little splotches of blood on his sheet and the blood was mixing with the yellow from the eggs Jeez held up his hand again, palm out. The coal-oil lamps almost flickered out. Then he fell over dead.

Grinning, Red was still standing there, smoke still coming out of his gun barrel, when he saw Brew in his long-tailed coat and stovepipe hat edging his way from the back of the room. Those that were near the door beat it outside and the rest knocked each other down trying to get away from the bar and under the benches. If there'd been a mouse hole around some of them would have tried to crawl into it. Some of the boys knocked out their teeth and gouged up their faces trying to flatten themselves out on the floor. The women huddled together like sheep in a storm.

Brew' made his way almost to the front, then leaned with his back up against the bar. "Red," he said, calm as you please, "you were saying something about guts. I say that old man had more guts that a hundred white-livered bastards like you and Bonanza. By God, you started the

fracas with Jeez but you're gonna finish it with me. Step outside, so we won't hit anyone else, and I'll prove it."

Red still had his pistol in his hand but his arm was hanging down at his side. Evidently he figured that since they were two against one they'd have a better chance if they got outside where the only light was that from the gambling joints and saloons along "C" street. Bonanza went first, Red behind him. When they passed Brew', he followed them about five paces, the butt of his pistol sticking out over his coattails. Just as he stepped through the doorway, Red spun around quick as you please to catch Brew' off his guard. But he didn't even get to pull the trigger, for Brew', like greased lightning, plugged him right between the eyes. Red went clean over backwards, rolled over the boardwalk and fell into the dust in the street. Bonanza had made a run for it the minute he'd got outside, but Brew' got him in the back before he could dodge in between the Sawdust Saloon and O'Neill's assay office. It only took him one shot.

Then Brew' walked back into the Melodeon where the boys were beginning to crawl out from under the benches. He walked over to where Jeez was lying on the stage in a pool of blood and rotten egg. Brew' took off that hat he'd been wearing all that time, and said, "Boys, I don't know where he came from or where he's going, but he was a brave man and died like one. Tell Brown to fix him up, and give him the best casket he's got in the house. It's on me." Then Brew' added, "Old man, you Christs shouldn't always be getting yourselves killed." There was lots of argument about that afterwards.

Everybody on Sun Mountain, including two Piute chiefs and a dozen Chinks, turned out the next day for Jeez' burial. Hugh Fitzpatrick and Tom Beasley were out with their two volunteer fire companies, hand pumps and fire hats. And the Virginny City Bugle Corp. Most of the mines——the Ophir, the Yellow Jacket, and lots of others——closed down and all the boys went. They buried Jeez in real style, and put up a marker for him, a marble one, saying: "He made His One and Only Appearance on Sun Mountain, Aug. 4, 1863."

Grampa sat there that day fingering the trigger of his old rifle. "I always had it figgered," he said, "nothin' much woulda come of them Sun Mountain Gospelers if Red hadn't killed Jeez, and if it hadn't been fer what happened after Jeez was buried. Baldy and Dick was both killed the next day on their way out fer another load of red-eye. It was on the Geiger Grade, just about where they'd said they'd met Jeez. A landslide knocked 'em off of the grade. Tom Beasley found 'em, half-covered with dirt. And I'll be damned if on the very next day there was no sign of Jeez' grave. The earth just up and swollered it. That got people to worryin' and there was lots of confugalties." Grampa looked at me, kind of proud he could use a big word like that. "Yes siree, but I figgered that it just happened thataway. Just like it did to Beasley's cabin a couple years later. Back he comes from Piper's Opera House one night, and his

house was gone, swollered up. That hull mountain was nothin' but a honeycomb, it was, what with all the tunnelin'. Yes siree, that old man, no matter what these Amen-snorters say, musta went loco crossin' Forty Mile. That's the way I always figgered it. But I'm tellin' yuh, ever' damn word I told yuh is true. Yes siree, I'd swear to it 'fore a judge."

BEFORE THE DAY

The siren from the chimneys says to the light: arise.
The light in the limber brain asleeping lies,
And so, sleeping, in the skies.

The voice from the furnace stands, rends, and calls: wake,
To the look in the head that must see a day to make,
And the east in the skies looks now too, for the waker's sake.

JOSEPHINE MILES

MY OWN

Making a music of my own
Turning round a moon-round head
Spilling moonlight on the bed
And knowing this is not a song.

Knowing this a silver chain
Fastened somewhere, fastening
Upon an echo, listening
And hearing there is not a sound.

MARGARET WHEELAN GROTE

BOOKS

THE MUSEUM OF VAN WYCK BROOKS

Mr. Brooks has had a long and distinguished career as a literary critic and in his time has been the spokesman for a large proportion of American writers. Like most successful people in every profession, however, he has tended to rest upon his reputation at its high point, and attempted to retain that position without reckoning on the continual flux of ideas around him. He has tried not only to stem the tide of literary opinion but to turn it back, to recapture an earlier attitude that even he had discarded in his former work. As a consequence we now find him out of step with his times, renouncing the values held by his younger contemporaries, yearning after a past that holds little intellectual validity for our day, and falling more and more into the category of a mere popularizer of literary history, a garrulous bookman admiring without discrimination, and what is worse, idolizing the literature of the American past apparently just because it is American.

There is a literary generation which conceived **America's Coming-of-Age** as the herald and standard of its credo, and which accepted **Letters and Leadership** as its decalogue. The question is not whether those early books assessed American culture rightly but if they were written out of a spirit of inquiry, if they were in the true sense 'criticism.' I believe they were; but the same cannot be said of Brooks' more recent work, work done since he has solidified into pundit and become a valuable literary property, a Book-of-the-Month perennial, "America's Most Distinguished Literary Critic." That work is not criticism but appreciation, and this is the road that too many critics have taken in quest of ease and 'success.' It is the more to be regretted for Brooks at one time seemed to be a standard-bearer; and the cheapening of his work has seemed to many a sort of betrayal.

His latest appreciation, **The World of Washington Irving (Dutton, 1944)**, is a long and sometimes stodgy, sometimes interesting survey of America's literary beginnings, and covers the period from colonial times to the 1840's without reference to the New England writers dealt with in the earlier volumes, **The Flowering of New England** and **New England: Indian Summer.** I think there is no diminution of vigor or grasp of materials in this series; but to compare it with the books of Brooks' earlier phase, there is a definite decline of spirit, a willingness to accept mediocrity without apology, a too-eager affirmation, a want, in short, of the critical spirit without which no significant assessment is possible. Moreover, the series begins more and more to resemble a large picture gallery in which every exhibit is given equal prominence, and no method of selectivity or principle of display is apparent. Brooks gives the impression of a man standing back to admire the handiwork of his artists and to comment on them without reference to their place in the stream of art, isolating them for the purpose of exposing their merits, playing down their defects, removing them from the rigors of comparison which might minimize their importance. No thematic system is followed and hence no referents are given. We are asked to admire and appreciate and not to judge. Criticism has been abandoned in favor of mere sanction.

For all that one can tell from this account, Washington Irving may have been as significant a writer as Jane Austen, or Cooper as Balzac. William Gilmore Simms seems to come off nearly as well as Poe, and the countless smaller talents, Kennedy, Halleck, Willis, Paulding, Brown, Brackenridge, are lengthily and most respectfully treated. There is then so much of provinciality in this assessment that one must conclude it was the purpose to praise, not appraise, and to temper criticism at all costs to national pride. The real significance of every figure in the book, with the exception of Poe, is dubious:

and if **The World of Washington Irving** were to fall into the hands of a Martian, he would have difficulty distinguishing between its characters and those of a conceivable similar volume on Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe and Tolstoy. This weakness is fundamental and tends to invalidate the entire plan of the Brooksian history. It is in vain that so much evident labor has been lavished on details, so many forgotten volumes turned over, annotations made by the score, and enthusiasm registered throughout 500 pages.

How was it possible for a once discriminating critic to examine our early writers with such lamentable result? Edmund Wilson observed that Brooks made an effort to select from Cooper, for example, fragmentary passages with which to establish an erroneous conception of Cooper's prose style. Lifting truncated phrases, he was able to present a seemingly convincing exhibition of felicity which Wilson's investigation did not bear out. Wordy and wooden, the Cooper style is usually bad; he was an improvisor and no craftsman. His real distinction lies in his travel sketches and appraisal of American democracy. Irving's lack of originality, his rewriting of others' histories, his bland and watery style do not square up with the indulgent bill of health Brooks gives him. Simms, a sort of southern Cooper, appears almost in the stature of a Scott, and we are left with the salient comment of a contemporary visiting Englishman, "Simms is not a great man? Then, for God's sake, who is your great man?"

Poe alone receives the kind of examination which does honor to our memory of Van Wyck Brooks. In two too-short chapters we have an essential Poe limned with insight, neither over-playing the psychopathic Poe as Krutch has recreated him, nor falling into the panegyrics of Quinn. I suspect that Poe was the only writer Brooks felt he could approach with real respect, and if he had written of Bryant, Cooper, Irving and Simms as their merits deserve, comparing them only with Poe (if he did not wish to extend his comparisons to world artists), we should have had

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Dealing with the cultural progress of the American west in the first half of the Nineteenth Century, some sections of this book definitely savor of the study and the easy chair. It is to be doubted if in his handling of them Brooks has done justice to such figures as Bonneville, Gregg, Beckwourth, Lewis and Clark. More able because Brooks is more in sympathy and better acquainted with the subjects are the chapters on Jefferson, Payne and Audubon. In writing literary history the minor scribblers demand some sort of notice, and they are all here given due mention, though little discrimination is made between those who professed to be men of letters and those whose literary efforts were merely incidental.

If Mr. Brooks could discover a guiding principle in his portrait galgery, if he could forswear his wonderful appreciation of the American past only for its Americanness, if he would set up comparative standards, his announced project, the writing of a comprehensive history of our literature, might be the monument he wishes to make of it. But if he perseveres in his current approach, it will be little better than Griswold's **Writers of America,** which indeed the present volume persistently calls to mind.—George Snell.

SOME ARE NEW

What is perhaps the best poem in Oscar Williams' anthology NEW POEMS 1944 (Howell, Soskin) was printed more than a decade ago, in the book NOW WITH HIS LOVE. It is the familiar and praised "Perspectives Are Precipices" of John Peale Bishop. Obviously it is out of place in an anthology which Mr. Williams has described as "a collection untried by time and localized to the space of a year."

Yet its presence in the collection seems not altogether unreasonable. For the terror and enormity of its scene, Dalian landscape, sky suggesting the perspectives of Berman, and the horror conveyed by the central image of the soul violating its own integrity, and the peculiar combination of uncertainty and finality which it evokes, though hardly new, are contemporary in the sense that their immense significance for life continues to attract and baffle us, while we go on exploring it.

Many of the poems in Mr. Williams' anthology have not so much justification for their inclusion. Some (for example, those of Frost and Jeffers) are no more than merely novel rearrangements of the terms of an awareness already sufficiently established. The worst of such poems by any of the more well known writers is one by Archibald MacLeish. Banal and diffuse, it sounds like imitation of imitators:

"They say,
We were young. We have died.
Remember us."

Really new poetry, I suppose, must involve some sort of advance in mastery. Judged by this criterion, even the work of Wallace Stevens is disappointing. Now that Mr. Stevens talks so much of reality there is less reality in his work, though some of that surprise and abundance which distinguish his best poetry remains. His established scheme and symbols preoccupy him. Apparently he knows too well what he wants to say, and his knowledge constricts his insight often to something less than the full primordial perception which is the source of living change.

Some such restriction of insight within the areas of the known and accepted is the gravest defect of most of the poets represented in the anthology, soldiers and civilians alike. Few, of course, have achieved their limiting certitudes as Mr. Stevens has. With most, the difficulty is simply that the formulated aspects of their awareness are in exclusive control. As with nearly all men in the modern world. The poets whose work appearing in this anthology most fully escape this limitation—Auden, Bishop, Comfort, Spender, Tate, Thomas*. Warren—are not writers with up-to-the-minute material to exploit, but those who are concerned with the organization of insight.

Those who suffer most from the

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*Read Thomas' "When I Woke" without the last five lines, which are from another poem.

defect are the soldier poets. Much of their writing about the war, presumably under the stress of recent experience, merely reports, explains, or exhorts:

"Remember only, for your own salvation,
Your brotherhood and give it to the world."

It seems unlikely that the experiences of war would foster the activity of the mind in its wholeness. Which means that we ought not to expect the best poetry to come immediately out of war. It may come later. But for the time being the civilian writers are the ones we may expect to free and recreate our consciousness.—B.G.

CRITICS GOOD AND BAD

Prof. Henri Peyre, of Yale University, has written a very acute and diverting account of the fluctuating and never quite satisfactory relations between authors and critics (**Writers and Their Critics,** Cornell University Press, 1944). Their interdependence is unquestionable, but so are the sources of their perennial misunderstanding. According to Prof. Peyre, the critics are the ones to be blamed, for they have consistently violated the most elementary standards of inquiry, such as dispassionateness, a sense of proportion, and intellectual independence. They have either leaned heavily on tradition or else made an idol of posterity as the sole competent judge; they have been swayed by party spirit or dulled by complacency and laziness. This view, sweeping though it may seem, is carefully substantiated by numerous examples drawn partly from the past, partly from the present. To be sure, there are illustrious exceptions; yet these do not invalidate the main argument, which may be summed up as follows: throughout the occidental tradition of art and letters, critics have not been sufficiently aware of their responsible function as mediators between author and public. Instead, they have largely succumbed to two powerful temptations. They have either catered to the taste of

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the public—rather than guiding it—or more frequently they have substituted private whims or doctrines for unbiased investigation. The good critic should be catholic in his range, devoid of preconceptions and infinitely patient in his research: but how many, even among the most famous critics, can be said to measure up to this standard? Yet there is nothing superhuman in such a combination of virtues; in fact, they are fundamental and should be recognized by all intelligent practicioners of criticism.

Prof. Peyre is of course aware of a recent movement, in Britain and America, to define more clearly the basis of critical inquiry and to arrive at certain minimal standards of judgment. This he considers all to the good, so long as the effort is directed toward honesty of workmanship rather than doctrinal codification. Scientific objectivity is a concept alien to true criticism, for it would stifle the free exercise of the individual sensibility. Yet, in conjunction with integrity, it is the critic's esthetic sensibility that counts, especially when original or experimental products are to be judged.

Prof Peyre's book is scholarly yet shows no trace of being pronounced **ex cathedra.** It should be seriously studied by critics and authors alike.

—Francis C. Golffing.

WESTERN WILD LIFE

I have read the book of Western Wild Life (Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1944). I like it very much. The storys I liked best were Ma-za-ma the mountain goat and Rufus the Red Lenx. Ma-za-ma the mountain goat has three parts. The part I like best is four footed danger. I like it espeshly well becuese I am from the west. The story of four footed danger is about how a wolf climes up the lege and almost eats ma-za-ma the mountain goat but the big goat noked him of the lege and the wolf was killed. I think the book is for boys and girls about 8 to 12.

—Lelia West, Age 8.

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TWO WORLDS

With the publication of her second volume of poetry, **Moderate Fable** (Reynal and Hitchcock, New York), Marguerite Young steps into place with the most talented and exciting of our generation's metaphysical poets. The book is rich in a fund of fresh imagery, selective enough to add up to a personal myth; original in the sense of a highly individual assimilation and utilization of traditional influences; and exciting as an unself-conscious record of the contemporary sensibility, with its use of wit and irony in place of impossible affirmation, its playfulness with, yet nostalgia for, the idea of God, its positivistic philosophies, its romantic preference for the fantastic.

The poems are built on a series of posited theories, some drawn directly from the philosophies, as in "Bishop Berkeley of Cloyne" in which the Bishop speaks to John the Baptist, "that speechless head Laid out like a boar's head on a plate of brass":

> "For if matter were taken away,
> the Bishop Berkeley said,
> The vast majority would never
> notice at all,
> We eat and drink ideas, we are
> clothed with them
> As water clothes the water-
> fall . . ."

and some from Miss Young's personal drollery, as in "Noah's Ark":

> "For God is loneliest, He is crea-
> tion's flaw
> And celibate, nor passenger of
> this uniting ark.
> Unmated were the beautiful He
> knew . . ."

In dramatic stance, or perspective, the poet is looking from outside the "public universe," like an Epicurean god between the spheres, and seeing from the impersonality of that wintry place, earth ("the loneliest voyager'), multiplicity, the sweep of chance, change, the dissolution of all fixities. Her imagery is drawn from such various sources as the Bible, her philosophers, Aristotle's **Book of Marvels,** books of bird lore, and Darwin's **Voyage of the Beagle;** her principle of selection is based on a fascination with the exotic, the extinct, the "perilous" beings who dwell "beyond the curve of probables" along with God, the unicorn, angels, and "the hind that breeds only at the rising of Arcturus," and on a belief in the marvelous uniqueness of every being, of every moment.

The problem of making poetry out of philosophy, of keeping the necessary tension of abstraction with concrete image, has been met with a high degree of success, for the poems (except for "That Apple Was Mental," perhaps) are by no means abstruse or doctrinaire. Theories are subordinated to serve a poet's purpose, serving merely as windows through which we may look into rooms set with the furniture of Miss Young's rich and baroque imagination. Since the objective point of view is itself an abstraction from the referents of common emotional situations and "everyday experience," the poems rely always upon the tug of abundant imagery, sometimes on the emotionally connotative Biblical usage of "Yea" and "thy," a ballad-like repetition, and rhyme, however subtle it may be, for their emotive counter-tension with the intellectual

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motifs.

If Marguerite Young's view is from outside the public universe where the individual is diminished to pinpoint and the sweep and play of cause and chance and force are large in sight and meaning, Karl Shapiro's is not. From participation in the tangle of an immediate and actual war, he says in his introduction (**V-Letter and other poems,** Reynal & Hitchcock, New York) that "in the totality of striving and suffering we come to see the great conflagration abstractly, with oneself at the center reduced in size but not in meaning, like a V-letter."

The "subjects" of his poems are those of physical rather than metaphysical actuality ("Troop Train," "The Gun," "Elegy for a Dead Soldier") and where Miss Young reaches down from the abstract in theme to the concrete in image, Shapiro works from concrete situation in theme to larger implication through imagery. In style, there is heavy use of the connectives "of," "and," "like," "as," which gives to the poems a curious (in modern poetry) openness and limpidity, as in, for instance, "The Gun":

"The kiss of your blast is upon
me, O friend of my fear,
And I savour your breath like a
perfume as salt and austere
As the scent of the thunder of
heaven that brims in the moat."

Perfect end-rhymes and the clear, heavy rhythms resulting from this relaxed structure make for a more candid music than we are used to, as if in war one must feel incapable of making the absolute assertions of metaphor or condensed conceit, or as if one must create in poetry a relief from the dissonance of battle scenes and sounds.

Despite the undeniably skillful writing it includes, **V-Letter** seems a thinner poetry than Shapiro's earlier volume, **Person, Place And Thing,** less intense and more liable to error. For along with a candor of rhyme and rhythm, the topicality of the verses lends itself to a candor of attitude—and overstressing of opinion—as in the D. H. Lawrence poem. Most successful are the pieces in which the situation itself and its emotional implications are simply recreated.

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however, are distinguished additions to our current literature. Miss Young's world and Mr. Shapiro's are equally valid and valuable, and it is a tribute to the versatility of modern poetry that both can be creatively realized in that form.—Mona Van Duyn.

STRAWS IN THE WIND

Though they have little else in common, Clyde F. Murphy's **The Glittering Hill** (E. P. Dutton, 1944) and Warren Beck's **Final Score** (Alfred A. Knopf, 1944) are curiously alike in three ways: 1. both ask questions about the nature of law; 2. both raise problems about racial minorities in this country; and 3. both are concerned with the impact upon society of irrational promptings to action. Taken together, they provide one clue, if one only, to the way the straws are blowing in this period when there are very few straws to blow—the kind of straws, at least, that are worth anything as prophets.

As they stand, both novels must be treated as serious novels (what Hollywood does to **The Glittering Hill** is an entirely different matter.) **Final Score** is a cocktail bar rehash of the career of a football player who ungraciously refuses to get out of the limelight after he has hung up his football togs, and around whom crystallizes vague discontents of the lower middle class of his city, who find in him accidentally a political symbol to represent militantly their ignorance and sterility. Sterile or ignorant, the lower middle class still has wounded egos, and in a democracy, when rightly handled, has power. The parallel with Hitler is carefully drawn. Against the football player and his followers are ranged the educated, the genteel, the moneyed, and the law. Mr. Beck is willing to agree that law is the rationalization of the interests of the ruling class, but insists that law controlled by an informed ruling class is more liberal and just than law in the hands of a football player or of a mob. Whether these are the only choices facing us is not really considered, for the problem is arbitrarily narrowed to the two. Unless one can work up an interest in the problem it presents, the reader of **Final Score** is not likely to find it exciting, since this is a novel of much analysis and little action, but the problem is an important

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The Glittering Hill, on the other hand, as a serious novel is not entirely respectable. Some of its reviewers have not put their fingers on its greatest weaknesses because they have not taken it seriously enough. As a story it moves well, in spitte of some awkwardness in the handling of detail, and some of the pictures it presents are sharp and clear. The minor characters are often well drawn; the major characters not so well; and the plot is something concocted by the author with some assistance from the history of the copper kings of Butte, Montana, but with no consideration of the characters who have to act it out, and who, consequently have to do peculiar things on occasion. Taken as a yarn with no expository meaning the story may pass as light fiction, which it is not, since the author is aiming consistently at saying something about the nature of law. Inasmuch as Mr. Murphy is himself a lawyer, the layman should perhaps treat his interpretations with due respect, but to this reviewer these interpretations seem mighty unhappy.

The Glittering Hill is the story of the financial and political war between two copper magnates of Butte back in the early days of the century. Both are willing to play fast and loose with any abstract principles of law, but one of them is in power and the other wants to get in. It is true that the usurper openly flaunts the sordidness of his methods, but Mr. Murphy applauds too righteously when the good old American public (Irish miners in this case) rise to defend the law's nobility and throw the rascal out. The point is that to Mr. Murphy it is law that returns, abstract, impartial law, and patently it is no such thing. A writer has no business arriving at such conclusions from such contrary evidence, unless he is trying to fool somebody, and then he has no business doing it either. The opening chapters of the book promise an explanation of the Irish mentality, but this promise is soon forgotten once the main story gets underway. The treatment of the political implications of Irish cohesiveness is, however, well handled. The problems raised are, apparently, of current importance, but the answers leave something to be desired. —Baxter Hathaway.

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Comment

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 114)

Austin Warren. The list will be augmented with a final announcement to appear in the Summer issue. Ten years' continuous publication of a magazine in these times we believe to be something of a record. We remember the dire predictions of friends when RMR was founded that we would not last three issues, and we have lasted nearly forty. We expect to go on for forty more, at least. Make sure of getting your Tenth Anniversary copy by subscribing today.

Among contributors to the present issue, **William March** is the best known. He has appeared several times before in these pages. In addition to his novels **Company K, The Tallons, Come in at the Door,** etc. he has published several collections of stories, and another is promised for summer 1945. He lives in New York City.

RMR publishes the first fiction by two writers in this number. **Mary I. Beck** and **Jarvis Thurston** have widely differing backgrounds and subject matter. Miss Beck was born in Yochow City, Hunan, in 1917. She says "I love China and her people, and have always been amazed by the great contrasts she offers. There is no halfway reaction to China: she inspires a love which almost justifies the word 'consuming' as well as equally great shock and disgust." She adds "I am a writer who edits, or an editor who writes— anyway, for a living I am an Assistant Managing Editor (whatever that is!) in a publishing house. For fun, I design clothes." Jarvis Thurston was literary editor of the Ogden Standard-Examiner for several years and is now enrolled for postgraduate work at the University of Iowa. He has frequently appeared as critic but this is his first appearance as a writer of fiction.

Mona Van Duyn is Mrs. Jarvis Thurston. Her poetry has been published widely.

William Fifield has done writing for radio and movies, and his stories have been reprinted in the O. Henry Memorial Award volumes.

Lelia West is the 9-year-old daughter of one RMR editor.

Francis Golffing is a Pfc stationed at Biloxi, Miss. and has contributed many poems and reviews to this and other magazines.

Hubert Creekmore, author of the book of poems **The Stone Ants,** is a Lieutenant (j. g.) in the Navy.

Josephine Miles is one of the most important younger poets, the author of two volumes of verse.

Margaret Wheelan Grote lives in Berkeley, California. She was winner in 1944 of the Emily Chamberlain Cook Prize in Poetry, awarded annually to an undergraduate at the University of California.